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AUTHOR Huff, Delores J.
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ABSTRACT

This book explores the legacy of institutional racism in American Indian education, presents two contrasting assessments of Indian education in public and tribal schools, and outlines a more aggressive federal role to assure equity in local school systems. For most of its history, federally funded Indian education aimed to assimilate American Indians into the dominant U.S. culture. In the 1960s, evidence of high Indian dropout rates and school ineffectiveness led to legislation promoting Indian parent participation and tribal control of schools. By the 1980s, tribal sovereignty was under attack from national and state agencies that claimed that Indians were not ready to run tribal schools and that tribal schools should not be independent of state or federal regulations. In this context, ABT Associates was hired by the U.S. Department of Education to compare the cost effectiveness of tribal, public, and Bureau of Indian Affairs schools, but with the real purpose of justifying reduction of tribal self-determination. At about the same time (mid-1980s), a small rural school system in the West ("Madison") was being evaluated because of grievances filed by Indian parents. The town was near a reservation and received substantial impact aid to fund schools due to high Indian enrollment. The Madison study compared the performance of Indian students in Madison schools with that of public school students across the state in terms of the quality of education. Most of this book is devoted to these two studies. Based on very different premises--"melting-pot" assumptions versus cultural pluralism, the studies had diametrically opposed evaluative methodologies. The ABT study was short and primarily statistical, while the Madison study included long-term observations and measures of teacher and community expectations. The final chapters suggest increased federal intervention through a

voucher system based on accountability of public schools and teachers. Contains references and an index. (SV)

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